



*you've got a friend in
pennsylvania #1*



welcome to issue #1 (fall '09) of you've got a friend in pennsylvania. this perzine is dedicated to fomenting my past and present experiences. i grew up in PA and still see it as my rightful home no matter where i go. [and why the title? it used to be on our liscense plates from 1984 to 1987, when i was born!]

the first part of this zine consists of part one of a three-piece series that i like to call "the slovenija diaries". i traveled to the country for a three-week study abroad program and had an excellent time. our only assignment was to create a website for a cultural center called metelkova in the center of the country's capital, ljubljana. the enclosed writings have been spliced together from my travel journal, blog posts and memory in order to give proper characterization and make some events more easily understood.

after the yugoslavian army left slovenija in 1991, their former military barracks were henceforth located in the newly-defined capital, ljubljana. the city government intended to bulldoze the cluster of vacant concrete buildings but a group of punks, radicals, artists and activists, known as the network for metelkova, decided to squat the "fourth of july" barracks and make use of the space to benefit the immediate community. they have struggled adamantly since then; several attempts have been made by the city council to demolish metelkova, some of which were partially successful. today, metelkova consists of art galleries, clubs, venues, a bar, an a-infoshop, a world-renown hostel, a garage, work spaces, living quarters and an anarchist library in a decommissioned bus among dozens of other things. i could talk for hours on end about metelkova and what it consists of but hopefully i have given a sufficient background on the space. below i will provide sources that can provide more information about metelkova. i have them all in pdf format and would gladly e- or snail mail them if asked!

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sources on metelkova:

- "Metelkova" and Other Projects in Ljubljana: Actions in Zones of Indifference" by Marina Gržinić
- "Metelkova, Ljubljana: Cultural Exception Falls from Grace" by The Klub Gromka collective & The AKC Metelkova Mesto Forum
- "The Metelkova Story" by The Network for Metelkova

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"I must keep the spirit of my revolt and myself alive... I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about me, about you... To discover myself, to preserve myself, to make myself, to achieve self-autonomy... I write because I'm scared of writing but I'm more scared of not writing."

- Gloria E. Anzaldúa

the slovenija diaries
part I

mon may 11. 19.30

i leave in t-minus 8 days and still can't really believe it. me? overseas? nah. i'm not so fortunate. at least i don't feel that way. so far i haven't been "excited" like everyone else asks. when i get on the plane in philly, when i get into germany, when i meet up with friends in slovenia, then i'll be excited. hell yeah i will.

i think my mom thinks i'm like ernest, from all of those cheesy movies. whenever she talks about me traveling, she'll say something like "this isn't sari flies home from new orleans! this is sari flies to the other side of the world!" i don't know about you, but i would totally watch "sari flies to the other side of the world". in theaters. with popcorn and one of those nasty ices and everything.

i have one paper and one final between me and going home-going to europe. i'm preparing by listening to "every town will celebrate" on constant repeat and drinking way too much orange juice for my own good. i don't understand how anyone could think i was cool. seriously.

weds 20 may. 08.44

just got frankfurt, terminals are huge, lots of languages spoken. i found out the hard way that us dollars are worth shit here. i had 300 us and got back 240 eur and change. the true equivalency is 273 eur. 240 eur = 342.86 usd. i just paid out 50 bucks to exchange money. what the fuck. not the best way to start out in europe. oh, and i still have 3+ hours to wait for my flight to slovenija. shit.

the guy i sat next to on the flight was very nice: a 74 year old german microbiologist who does work in genomes, jogs daily, wrote 3 books and has been all over the world. i was attempting to get my mind off of the cramped window seat by watching a discovery channel piece about the great barrier reef when he started giving me weird looks. he eventually dozed off with his head cocked back as far as it could have been, mouth agape wordlessly, and i didn't think anything of it. an hour later, once i took my headphones off due to uncomfortable 5+ hours of rub on my piercings, he asked if i had ever been to australia. i commented that it was my first time flying internationally and he seemed happy to be a part of the experience. he had a self-impressed air about him as he chattered on about hiking in the alps, yearly trips by train out of germany into its surrounding countries and his favorite places to visit. he mentioned that he had asked about australia because he had indeed went snorkeling in the great barrier reef and was impressed by its cool currents and unbelievable colors and textures. i told him i felt like a total asshole for never being out of the country before but he chalked his travels up to his age, job requirements and the fact that european countries are so close together. he really reassured me that i wasn't going to be spat on or treated like a stupid amerikan by the europeans i was going to meet during my study abroad, like they prepared us for. i had the thought stuck in my head for at least a month leading up to the trip and braced myself for whatever stereotypes, generalizations or anti-american sentiments that would be thrown at me. microbiologist guy was super nice about making me feel welcome in a grandfatherly way that gave me a push of confidence and cleared my doubts about not meeting receptive people in slovenija and croatia. i was really thankful for the guy sitting next to me. until we were about to get off the plane.

microbiologist guy left all his trash and his blanket on the floor in front of his seat, where i would have to walk all over it and risk tripping and falling into him. i believe leaving your shit on the floor is pretty disrespectful, like making it more difficult for the people who have to clean up after you. i decided to pick up the pile for my sake as well as save the flight attendants some time and

apparently microbiologist guy thought this was amusing. he watches me and says, "you'll make a great housewife someday." alright, hold up a fucking minute. this dude didn't know that i'm a women's studies major and that i had a patch on my back that read "feminist beatdown squad". he didn't know that i would have verbally kicked his ass had it been a different situation. i quickly turned down the sass and just said "i'm in college, so i don't have to." he laughed his little oh-girl-made-a-joke-but-that's-just-how-it-is laugh while i tried to write it off as cultural differences and died a little on the inside.

10.10

alright, this is ridiculous. i'm waiting for my flight at b11 near a café that keeps playing shitty 90s amerikan music. i just heard "waterfalls", "getting jiggy wit it" and some song by mariah carey all in a row. i had to stop reading tauk girl to write this.

thurs 21 may. sometime.

got into the airport, which was tiny as hell! it turns out that lara and ross were on the same flight but since we had never formally met i didn't recognize them until we got to baggage claim. there, we saw a wolf hide complete with its head propped up on the back of a seat. great welcoming committee. lb, one of the instructors, was waiting for us there since we were the last group to get in (murm got in later, around midnight, since her flights got fucked up). the 4 of us caught a 45-minute bus into ljubljana through slovenija's version of what i could classify as countryside. the beautiful scenery, music on the radio and road signs really made me feel like i was in europe. we got dropped off at the bus station and met emily and ayelet there. they were assigned the task of leading up to the hostel since they had gotten there early in the morning. we checked in and paid 10 eur for a security deposit on towels and sheets. i got my room key, dropped stuff off in the room and hung out on a grass mound right outside of the hostel kitchen with 14 of the 15 other students on the trip. "don't you think it's weird that as soon as we get into a foreign country we decide to sit on a grassy knoll and only interact with other amerikans?", i questioned. "yeah, guys, this is kind of lame", jadin remarked. "plus, we have to go to dinner in an hour", chelsea added. we left soon after for a 45 minute walk through the center of ljubljana taking pictures and seeing some popular attractions. our group ended up in an open-air restaurant for dinner, which took about 3 hours to complete. the non-vegetarians were served some kind of fish and a few of the guys ended up feeding hunks of it to a stray black and white cat who hung around the back of the restaurant. i had my pick from grilled veggies. everyone was pretty tired afterwards. we went back to the hostel and thought that we were going to find a bar for us to all go to but decided to stay in and drink instead. i had a union beer, which is native to ljubljana, much like the laško brand. i was impressed when i tried chelsea's radler, which is a mix of beer and lemonade. not as bad as it sounds. we also tried to find an EXPECT RESISTANCE show performance at metelkova that we picked up a flyer for but didn't find it. emily, mariana and i talked to a guy named nada for about an hour. he knew 6 or 7 languages, doesn't wear shoes, lives without electricity in an rv about 14km from ljubljana and is a writer. he helped us pick up a few slovenian words and talked about current issues that the country is facing.

today, we got up at 09.45 and had a minimal, bland breakfast in the hostel. i don't know if slovenians all like bland food or if it was just bland at the places i've been so far. after breakfast we went on a mini-tour of metelkova by jasna, who works at klub gromka and was one of the original squatters in 1991. she has beautiful auburn dreadlocks, was dressed in all black and had some really nice ear piercings. while talking, a thin woman with curly black hair came out of a building called pesci which was covered with vibrant, eye-catching paint and a beautifully decorated balcony. she offered to show us around it after we were done talking to jasna. ayelet, chelsea and i went in pesci, finding out that the place upstairs was a sort of clothing trade market as well as had a few working areas. the woman we had just met, mor,

was putting clothes onto sticks of bamboo strung up to act as makeshift racks. the 3 of us stood silently for a few seconds, watching her frail arms try to grab stacks of shirts with clothes hangers already attached. "do you want some help?" i finally said, doubling as an introduction and an offering. "yes, actually, that would be very nice!" she replied, her smile brightening her face. we pushed heavy boxes of donated items across the gritty floor from a storage room to be opened and assembled in the hallway. when we were finished, we met mor in a small but airy gallery called mizzart which had a little café area, dj station and dozens of art pieces and sculptures inside of it. she said we earned a drink and made us wonderful, fresh fruit smoothies that she had created herself. while cutting up a ripe bananas and dicing a crisp pear, mor told us that she was from israel and had come to slovenija to be with her boyfriend two years ago. she answered our general questions about metelkova and ljubljana as we finished our drinks. we then hung up the clothes we had previously pushed out of storage and snapped some photos of the space. before leaving, mor told us to each take something so i grabbed a large hardback book about a certain valley in slovenija with lots of beautiful pictures. i've decided to give it to c_____ so that he can see more of what slovenija looks like, even though we've been in a rough spot lately. it's weird to think that we're now in an "open" relationship but i'm actually excited about it.

we left mizzart and regrouped with the other students and left to go on the 25 minute walk to lb and dm's rented apartment for a meeting and an excursion to the grocery store. 16 american students in a slovenian grocery store makes for one hell of a time. i don't know if i've heard "oh my god, you HAVE to come see this" so many times in my entire life. murm found a full-sized pear inside of a bottle of vodka and i found a whole row of mayonnaise that was packaged in toothpaste-like containers. what a great idea. while admiring the varieties of beer for sale our professor dm gave us pointers as to which kinds were better than the others. i would have never imagined that i would be talking about beer with a professor. when we had pre-departure meetings, we were told we were representing our college! and amerika! and we had to behave and not drink and not get involved with anyone and not act out and not look like obvious, stupid, know-nothing amerikans! none of that left room for having adult conversations with our professors about alcoholic beverages or the insinuation that we should try them! i felt like i was going to be burned at the stake by my school's office of international studies.

an art show promo card from mizzart, where the wonderful mor worked



some drunk guys asked us where we were from. we told them to guess.

↑ think in the picture
what's your answer?
FUCKIN ENGLAND

fri 29 may. 11.00

after dinner last night all 16 of us left lb and dm's apartment to try and find a place called star park. one of us picked up a teen's guide to ljubljana at the hostel and it said this place was a haven for teenagers smelling of booze and cigarettes. it took us forever to find it and were really unimpressed when we did. by that time it was nearing 22.00 and not many drunk, smoky people were there. we did see two drunk guys pee on a construction wall, though. we decided to take our time walking back to the hostel to see the touristy areas at night.

once we got back to celica, a few people ordered beers and decided to throw in the towel for the night. i wanted to check out metelkova and went around with emily. eventually we were approached by a guy named baker, or so he said his friends called him. he was 20, tall and lanky, lived 17km away from ljubljana and worked in archives of a major phone company. just goes to show how necessary it is to be bilingual here. he was drinking shitty wine out of a 2 liter bottle and had crooked teeth but some fucking impressive charm about him. he asked emily and i if we knew who naomi klein, a canadian political analyst, was and tried to explain what she writes about. he brought up the indonesian tsunami and farmers being pushed out of their land to clear it for building hotels and other upscale establishments. i mentioned that things like that happen in amerika and that i wasn't surprised. he replied, "well, i don't blame you for it". that was the first time that i had to deal with a somewhat amerikan generalization and i wasn't really too offended. i did find it odd because he insinuated that i would be in some kind of

mizzart gallery



Pušenje stvara
izrazitu ovisnost,
nemojte ni
počinjati

cigarette warning

political standing to change that and i figured that since we were both punks that we would see me on the same level in terms of power or influence. after that, he asked me to dance with him. emily and i turned into klub gromka and a steadily more intoxicated baker stumbled after us. it was dark, smoky and flooded with large puddles of beer in random spots on the concrete floor. the music was some kind of killer european techno and i was impressed with the dj. baker stepped outside for a bit and a short older man probably in his late 40s wearing a plaid shirt came over to us with a huge grin on his face and attempted to semi-grind on emily. she started

yelling and we decided it was time to take a breather and sit outside. we ended up talking for over an hour about the trip, school and whatever else came to mind. i didn't really know emily before the trip and only came in contact with her through hanging out with mutual friends. she looks like she time warped from the 1950s due to her affinity for classy dresses, solid headbands and cute chin-length bob haircut. i really enjoyed talking to her and eventually realized that it was 04.00. we promptly went back to the hostel and fell into bed fully clothed, smelling like cigarettes and goofy off of baker's shared wine.

this morning we got up at 09.00, ate and came to the apartment to do work. we broke up into groups to discuss specifics about the website and came together as a whole to clarify what each of the 5 groups would work on. i've realized that i would never be able to participate in a school assignment like this at another university, this trip is so reflective of my school because of the open, town hall meeting-style of discussions, giving all of us students equal say in what we do as well as what we desire to get out of it. the dynamic is comfortable since we come from a tight-knit community already and i really enjoy this. i was very wary when we were only told that our final project would be a website with no concrete push in a certain direction towards achieving that end but now i see the positive side to it. we have true, autonomous, free reign over what we do during this study abroad over the next three weeks.

after the meeting, a majority of us and lb went on an excursion to the other side of town to find an art museum that lb had heard was very impressive. i've learned to go along with whatever she recommends at this point. she's quirky, sassy, hilarious and caring. she's a brown-grey haired photography professor in her 40s but majored in french as well as art in college. for a project she had to do at the time, she traveled and asked friends/strangers if she could photograph herself nude in their beds. i believe she is an evil genius and emily hopes to be just like her one day. anyway, she led us amongst an intricate gravel walkway / biking path into a lightly forested, garden-looking area and discovered the museum hidden amongst the trees. walking up to it was beautiful. we were surrounded by more shades of green than i could have ever imagined as well as some well-kept statues of a dancing couple and guardian dogs. after walking inside it was apparent that it was not the place that lb intended. the main exhibit was called "razočarala me je lara croft slike iz iger" which translates to "why i don't trust lara croft". it mainly consisted of screenshots from video games of varying platforms. there was also a darkened room where a reel of game trailers was being played. i saw one for a live action fighting game with lots of skinny white girls in bikinis called "bikini karate babes". as a gamer, i realized that games haven't come that far in terms of substance since the 90s. depressing. after finishing up at the museum, murm and i decided to go off on our own and explore the city before meeting up at the apartment for homemade dinner once again. i really enjoy hanging out with murm. we volunteered in new orleans for a month over winter break and became friends during that time, so i've liked traveling with her once again. we stayed quiet for most of the time, walking in unknown areas and taking pictures.

later on, murm, ayelet and i decided to go to klub monokel, the lesbian club at metelkova, for goth night! i had seen it advertised on the metelkova.org website that i had google translate into english. we were nervous walking into the spray painted door and down a drafty hallway into the club. at the door, a big burly man asked us for the 1 eur entrance fee before we could enter the club, which was blasting bauhaus. as we walked in there was a collective exchange of looks at one another; we had no idea what we had gotten ourselves into. about 12 girls were packed onto the main floor of a pretty small dance room and were completely, from head to toe, decked out in long red, black or purple dresses that reminded me of what hot topic used to sell back in the day. most of them had long, flowing black hair or dreadlocks and some went so far as to paint their faces casper white and smear on dark lipstick. they were extremely somber looking, which totally clashed with their erratic, flailing arms and occasional side-stepping dance moves. there were rotating lights that reflected off of shiny black strips hung from the ceiling which we decided had to be

notes from the museum

Bye - Nasvidenje ^{flamkar} ^{ljube} ^{čargo Ivan - avlije}
 morning - Dobro jutro $\bar{E} = ch$ $C = S(?)$
 afternoon - Dobro dan $\bar{S} = Ah$
 evening - Dobro večer

- Slovenian language was defended primarily by Slovenian priesthood
- In 1913 Slavic languages were banished from schools and religious education was conducted by teachers
- Life and Death Struggle of a National Minority - Lave Čermelj
- Organizations: Borba, Black Brotherhood (yacht), Tiger

March - 1940, Italian authorities arrested Tiger members, community students + political / cultural reps for illegal library, printing station and radio station - 22 people sentenced to death
 - Zaporci = prisoners

cut up trash bags, compared to the others, we were totally out of place, which is definitely saying something. marissa, who is a tomboy, had her long, dirty-blond hair pulled back into a pony tail and had on the only black thing she had with her (a child-sized t-shirt) and shorts. ayelet let her straight auburn hair flail around as she tossed her head back and forth with the beats and twirled around in her black floral print dress. murna tried her best to look the part by gelling her bangs, the longest part of her mostly short black hair, into a faux-devilock, dabbing on some black eyeliner and wearing a black mesh shirt with large white ruffles on the collar and sleeves. i wore what i had planned on wearing the entire trip, a black tank top, purple bandanna, black skirt cut from jeans and black leggings. we were mostly ignored by the crowd but made the best of it anyway.

we decided to take a breather and went outside for some air. we stood by the door for a few minutes and noticed a guy about our age break away from his group of friends and head for the door to klub monokel. we waited for him to come back out, knowing that there was a strict no-males policy that was being enforced by the intimidating bouncer we had encountered earlier. as expected, the teenage boy came back out the door in less than a minute, looking embarrassed but laughing and yelling at his friends in slovenian. we heard some kind of commotion going on at klub gromka and discovered that it was ska night! at one point we heard a ska rendition of "do you believe in life after love?" by cher and were so stunned that no one else was there to witness it. we danced for about an hour before heading back to the hostel and going right to bed.

sat 23 may.

our alarm clock was still set for 09.00 so murna, emily, ayelet and i decided to take advantage of the situation and get our things packed and our room cleaned up. for some reason, since we're taking a 2 day trip to zagreb starting tomorrow, all 16 of us have to move our things into a place called hotel park which is about 2 blocks from metelkova. i think dmi said something about the school wanting us to be there so we can leave our unnecessary items in our new, uncramped, air-conditioned, two person rooms. i will try not to complain too loudly about the extra space and lack of tiny / non-functional / generally smelly bathroom. i am also stoked to be rooming with emily. she's always up for being out late with me and talking to new people. most of the time, she pulls out a cigarette and walks up to people we think look interesting and says, "ogenj?" (pronounced aug-inl, which means fire in slovenian).

after getting our room assignments, about 10 of us went with lb to the museum we should have been at yesterday: the slovenian contemporary history museum. it was awesome! right away i found a really intricate timeline on resistance

in slovenija and jotted down some notes on the opposite page. it's interesting to know that independent press was a tool for dissent and makes it easier to understand why DIY media is so important in this culture today. it was great to have background information since i'm fairly sure i'll be writing a historical piece about slovenian alternative press and don't have any information about that time period. i also saw lots of beautiful drawings done by slovenian prisoners in german and italian war camps during world war II. apparently, both the fascist regimes saw no harm in giving the POWs art supplies because, well, what harm could they do sitting around doodling all day? most of the art featured was created by artists that had no prior experience with drawing or painting prior to their incarceration. just mind blowing.

after the museum, chelsea and i decided to get 3.40 eur falafel sandwiches at a place we've passed on the way to the center of town at least twice. holy shit. had to be the best falafel i've ever had. the girl working was super cute and super sweet, and gave me extra hot sauce! walked around and ended up at metelkova later on in the evening. we somehow met an australian guy (we knew he was australian before we talked to him because he was wearing a brown leather vest with no undershirt and a necklace with a large tooth on it) who ordered me a shot called bear's blood in the 'punk bar', jalla jalla. i have no idea what was in it but it tasted like robtussin. about 6 of us went to a sweet skeleton bar called "p'r skelet" around 22:30. i got 2 sex in the jungle drinks and marissa and i each had a bay city bomber since the drinks were 2 for 1. we all chatted for a while and decided to go back to metelkova once again. i hung out with mariana, a thin dancer with wavy long black hair and a beautiful face. she had met some guys the night before and was talking to them for a bit. at some point a weird albanian guy bought us laškos and assumed we were okay with being his arm candy from then on. her three friends, amer, ali and robert, distracted him while we drank in peace.

i overheard robert ask mariana if she liked mastodon. after a brief silence, i interjected, "you like mastodon?" he sat next to me and we talked for a while about amerikan music, mainly mastodon and deftones. he showed me his white pony tattoo while asking for recommendations for similar amerikan bands. he also took an interest in why i came to slovenija and answered my questions about his personal and home life. he stood about 6'0, was thin, had shoulder-length black, shiny hair covered up by a skull cap, brown skin and beautiful eyes. he told me he was a student at a local university studying linguistics and talked at length about his passion for cultural relativism and

mayobnaise!



literature, he grew up in ljubljana, where his parents met. his father is slovenian and his mother is macedonian, explaining his gorgeous skin tone. he even pulled out his wallet and showed me a wrinkled family photo he had stuffed into the back of it that had to be about 15 years old (he was about 23). his friends, ali and amer, came over to tell him they were going to rog, which is an old reformed bike factory turned artistic and music space, like a smaller metelkova. amer, a big goofy-looking guy, had been chatting with emily, so the 5 of us walked over together.

the building was run-down and surrounded by sporadic patches of trees and trash, which was all i could see in the dark. we stumbled into a small seating area outside under a tarp and robert, emily, amer and i relaxed on a wraparound couch for a while. robert and i continued our discussion about slovenian politics and education. at one point i heard amer asking emily, "so, in amerika, are all girls sluts?" and "how many men have you fucked?" she scoffed immediately, retorting, "i am not going to tell you that!" he laid it on pretty thick with her, i tell you what. i felt terrible that i was having a great conversation while some dude was being a fucking caustic asshole. i jumped up, stating that i felt like dancing and found my way inside. we came into a massive, drafty room with a ceiling about 20 feet high and 60 feet long. on one end, there was a large dj station and a white pull-down screen displaying windows media player. on the other was a dimly lit bar. emily and i kept to ourselves until robert asked if we wanted laškos (my hero) and came back with two cold ones for us. we danced a little while longer, until she couldn't deal with the creepy amer any longer and wanted to go back to hotel park. while saying goodbye to amer, he put his arms around emily and gave her a suffocating kiss that was probably just as uncomfortable to watch. she yelped and grabbed my hand, walking quickly to the door. robert was nice enough to escort us back to the hotel and we decided to talk for a bit more.

after emily went inside, he said, "you know, when i was a kid i used to live in this building, on the 9th floor. back then it was an apartment building for lower-class families. that building over there was a retirement building, like it is



houses near the center of ljubljana



graffiti

now, when i was five, i was just looking out the living room window, watching people who lived there. all of a sudden, i saw a man jump off a balcony about 10 or 11 stories up. i remember looking down and only seeing his legs on the pavement. he hit that large tree, right there, on the way down. his upper half and guts were hanging out of the branches when the police came." shocked that he had just told me this, i asked if he was comfortable talking about it. "yes, i'm fine. i've come to terms with what happened and learned not to see death as a horrible thing, even at age 5. it made me realize my mortality yet appreciate the fragility of human life." i was really stunned after that. i mean, how do you deal with someone telling you something like that? what can i say? "oh, sorry some dude died, that sucks, but you're an amazing person for not being so affected by it?" well, okay, i said the latter.

oddly enough, at that awkward moment, ali and amer strolled by and started yelling at robert in slovenian so i couldn't understand them. it got pretty heated pretty quickly and i figured they wanted him to go with them. instead he sat back down, dejected and pissed off. i asked what had happened. "they're fucking cockheads", he replied. "they're mad at me for talking to you and claim that i'm only here because i'm trying to fuck you. they're upset that i won't come with them and try to party more." "well, you're more than welcome to leave because i don't want to be the source of argument between you and your friends," i retorted. he insisted that we drop the subject and that he was not talking to me due to sexual attraction. "i mean, i want to get to know you, but i am attracted to you," he said, as he leaned in closer, kissing me. i enjoyed myself but stopped him due to guilty feelings of thinking about c back home. i know we had decided to have an open relationship but i didn't want to come home and have to tell him that i did something more than just kiss someone while abroad. either way, he insisted on walking me to my room and semi-tackled me into the wall next to emily and i's door, kissing me again and propositioning me for sex. i declined, even though i wanted to say yes. he asked to use the bathroom and in my drunken state, ended up locking myself out of the room. realizing it was 06.00 and the seriousness of what had just happened, i told him to leave but that i did want to be friends with him and would e-mail him once i got back from zagreb on tuesday.

i opened a sliding door to a small porch about 5 feet long and 4 feet wide and propped myself up on the wall, accepting the fact that i would be sleeping there. two minutes later, mariana slid the door open, cheerily saying "hey saru, why are you out here?" i told her what happened and she let me crash on her floor until the morning. what an uncomfortable night.

*the next issue of you've got a friend in pennsylvania will feature
part II of the slovenija diaries!*

As you once told me years ago, when I am feeling at odds with someone I should take the time to write them a letter with the option of sending it or not. I have decided to take this advice and write this letter for you as well as send it.

This past year has been full of ups and downs for both of us. I was struggling to find any means necessary to get out of Lancaster and ended up in a much worse situation. You were dealing with trying to get stable on your own two feet and branch away from your mom, yet live it the fuck up while you still could. Ever since we each moved out of our respective houses it has become blatantly obvious that we have severely drifted apart. I want to apologize for anything I have ever done to worsen the rift between us. A relationship is a 2 way street and I definitely could have done more to be there for you even if I wasn't in the immediate area.

When we first met, I saw stars. I knew there was something in you that I wanted to be a part of and over the years I realized that my gut instinct had been right. You are intelligent, laid-back, caring, strong, determined, spontaneous, funny, enjoyable to be with, supportive and down to earth. There were so many things about you that I admired and aspired to emulate at the same time. We have had some amazing fucking times together over the past almost 5 years. I count the times when we were 15 and 16 going out to punk shows and catching up in smoky diners as one of the best points in my entire life and I think I always will. I was so glad to finally have a great, punk girlfriend in my life that I poured my heart out to you. I would have done anything you would have ever asked of me and was even taken up a few times to help you in some tough situations. I knew you were there for me as well but I was also aware that your aid expired at a certain point.

For the longest time, I was so angry with you. I couldn't understand how we could have gone from being the absolute best of friends to being practically strangers and I admit that I felt I was not to blame for it at the time. I remember the only time I ever yelled at you was on the phone when I asked if we could make plans and you said you would call me another time. I got heated and said you never call me back; not the best way to make someone want to talk to you. I didn't know what else to do.

Over the past year and a half I have regularly gone back in forth in my head over whether or not to give up on you. I had consistently given you everything I'd had emotionally and felt as if I had nothing to show for it. When we listened to the taped interview we did, you commented that you were too wrapped up in your own shit to help me out with my zine and I knew you felt guilty about that. Honestly, I think you are more concerned with yourself now than you ever were. You are a very high-maintenance person and me being a total giver made for an often times lethal situation. I feel that as soon as I moved to S_ and wasn't able to see you whenever you found the time, that you moved on to another friend. I think A_ has filled that gap for you and I must admit that I was jealous for a long time. I couldn't understand how someone could walk back into your life so quickly when we were the ones who had been best friends over the past 3-odd years. Still, I have never had a bad thought cross my mind about her. As for M_, I knew that was a fleeting kind of feeling and it wouldn't be long until she crossed you in some way.

Another big turning point was when you finally walked away from punk. I knew that initially you still loved the music and the message but I knew there was going to be a breaking point for you. I must confess, I did actually say that you were slowly degenerating into the Puerto Rican stereotype. I just remembered what you had said in all of

our talks about people thinking that you needed to look a certain way because of your ethnic background and fucking ran with it. Underneath that comment was the hurt that I felt over you growing apart from the scene. In hindsight, I should have never reacted that way. I was more upset that I was losing the last real punk friend that I had and felt totally neglected. I figured that punk was my last bargaining chip with you; it was the one thing that only the two of us had in common. It was selfish and immature for me to think that way. I had no business commenting on your outward appearance, especially since I got so tired of people doing it all the time to me. I understand that you feel the need to 'grow up' and I completely respect that. I'm so glad that you've been able to get your shit in line and start gravitating towards something other than partying every other night.

I know that we will most likely never have the same relationship as we did back in the day and I have finally come to terms with that. We've both changed and grown as people and that is to be expected. I just want to be blunt with you and let you know that I'm not going to wait around for you anymore. I have given up my daydreams of you calling me one day to get dinner, only to be reminded of the good times we had and then want to come back into my life, full-time once again. I think at certain points you have taken advantage of the fact that I would walk to the end of the fucking earth for you and will forgive you for absolutely anything negative that goes on between us. It's sad to say but I'm not going to do that anymore. It may be spiteful but if you're going to put me on the backburner then I think it is only fair to do the same for you. The cold reality is that we never talk and are practically strangers. I know everything about Y__ at age 17 but I know hardly anything about Y__ at age 20. I want you to know that I have tried my hardest to keep you in my life and be an active part of yours. But I feel as if I am unwanted and have decided to back down. You can't push a rope, you know?

Enclosed in this envelope are some pictures that I have found while packing for school and have decided to return them to you. Do what you will with them. I also leave the future of our relationship in this letter and in your hands. I'm not sure if you'll even want to do so much as speak my name after reading this but it is a chance I am willing to take. I figured I at least owe you the truth of how I have felt and handled everything over the past. I am open to the possibility of rekindling our flame if you see fit. But this time, I'm not waiting by the phone. If this is to be the last time you want to hear from me, I wish you a happy and fulfilling life. I hope only good things will come your way and that when you think of me that it be the Sari at age 17 as well as the Sari at 21. I love you. Always have, always will.

Yours,
Sari





awaken.

it's early in the morning and the sun is streaming through the partially-shut blinds, soon not be too late since the strands of light haven't reached my face yet. i stretch my legs a bit, accidentally exposing my feet from underneath the thin rug-like blanket i've mysteriously got all to myself. i roll over and spread it over his cool body, trying not to wake him. i like waking up before he does. it's nice to listen to "breathless on a hotel bed" and mumble along with the words, trying to recall the party last night.

i remember him and his best friend, both playing acoustic guitar and singing goofy songs about their friendship. he sips some limoncello and lightly bites my neck in between taunts: unspoken code that he's only starting to get tipsy after 5 beers. my 40 of mickey's kicks in as i sing along to a song about the sea with everyone else in the dark basement. did we also sit on the roof last night? oh yeah. i remember his roommate getting pissed about us interrupting his game of super mario world so we could climb out the window. ah well. it's not my fault he's got ~~time~~ time only left to our private overlook of park street. i wish his roommate was cool like his best friend. six of us crowded on one another on his futon mattress, half naked, giggling and pecking each other on the cheeks towards the end of the night. his best friend never cares how many of us are there, as long as we all agree that we'll go back home to spin with him someday, which is brought up like clockwork before its time for bed. i like that he doesn't mind if i'm curdly with our friends. being sandwiched in between him and the girl that uses way too much tongue was enjoyable but got old fast. we make breakfast plans with the others and left, walking down the hall to his room. he put on "pleasure", turned out the lamp and leapt into bed with me, even with only the light seeping in under the door illuminating the soles. i can see the smile on his face as he runs his fingers through my hair and tells me how much i mean to him. i pull him closer to me, kissing him with my unknown drunken force. we explore each others bodies for a long time before using our misaligned fingers to fumble around with shirts, belts, pants and underwear. he asks if i'd like to have sex and immediately after i breathlessly reply "yes", he grabs a condom and parts my lips with his tongue as he places it on himself. he fucks me from behind, just the way i like, pulling my hair and talking about how attracted he is to me. afterwards, we collapse into a tangled pile and i kiss him until he falls asleep. unfortunately, that's when i start getting cynical. i lie awake wondering if these house parties are going to get old, if drinking every weekend is going to get old, if our relationship is going to get old. he's supposed to be leaving for the DEP soon. is it even worth it to be here for the time being? are things going to chill out? why don't i just run? i mean, i'm happy and i love him, but fuck. that's a choice made for me right there. why should i stick around if he's not gonna be there in the end?

he stirs and i am brought back to the present. i pry my eyes open to see him staring back at me with dewy eyes, smiling. "hi", he practically chuckles. "want to go down and wake everyone up for breakfast?" "no," i reply. "i'd rather keep thinking."

talks with mom - 9.15.09

i make the first of my bi weekly calls to my mom. she's at work, even after everyone else in her office has left. she works for a non profit organization for the blind and visually impaired. i ask about her day, how she's been, what the update is with the new h1n1 sanitizers she's been hearing about at work. she jumps on details, being that she's distracted by her never ending work load and her moderate case of adult ADD. she changes the subject to what we believe are more important things, updates on our family. she begins to tell a story

oh my gosh, sar, did i tell you about grammy's aunt juke and i would have been rollin' grammy met one of her new neighbors, the one that lives above her in richard's old apartment. remember? she told me, 'i met the woman. she's a CNA.' "yeah", i replied, "that's a certified nursing assistant." "well, i asked her to cut my toenails." grammy met this woman and asks her, "will you cut my toenails if i pay you?" who does that? isn't that weird? i guess she asked her cause they do gross stuff. ew! maybe she works in a nursing home and wouldn't have a problem with it.

after she gives me mini updates on my step-father, younger sister and two dogs, she switches to her other favorite topic: god.

when moses lead the israelites out of the promised land, they wandered in the desert for four years and when they were in one desert, they were bitten by poisonous snakes and started to die. eventually, god said to erect an image of a serpent on a stick and when those that were bitten looked at it, they would be healed. i was reading something that said that god was saying they needed to look at what wounded them in order to be healed, like getting over your fears during therapy. i told this to joann and she said i should expound on it, write about it and i could teach it in church! i really am excited. did you know that the symbol for someone in the medical profession is a snake on a stick? that's where it comes from.

my mother knows i do not believe in god but chooses to talk of the subject every time we are on the phone. when speaking of my sister and my childhood she will say that her one regret was that she didn't keep us in church long enough. i think deep down she knows it wouldn't have changed anything in me but maybe it would have saved her from the heavy weight of guilt that has laid upon her since then.



photo of sar by emily hall

**"i want you all to stay in this little town with me.
when i die, you can scatter."**

- my grandmother

QUEER (IN)VISIBILITY

with this jumbled mess of an essay, i would like to give my thoughts on the topic of being queer and the struggles i have faced. this is not to say that G.L.B.T.Q.U.I.C. persons are on somewhat of an oppression hierarchy or that my experiences will be similar to another queer-identifying individual: we are all different. this is part of my story.

i have been in committed, long-term relationships with men since i was 16. i am now 22. i recently split with my boyfriend of 16 months. c __. we attempted to have an open relationship but jealousy, fear and insecurities kept either one of us from actually sleeping with anyone else. c __ fully understood that i was queer and had no problem with it. when the topic of my sexuality came up with friends, during and after our relationship, so many of them were confused or did not believe that i was queer since they had only seen me date c __. i'm sure this has had an effect on the way i feel about my sexuality. at the end of the day, it seems as if some people see me as pretending or just another one of "those girls" who only "goes gay" at parties or whatever. this is a major reason why i do not like the term bisexual—it has become synonymous with females who are only sexual with other females when intoxicated or being watched by males. i have never felt taken seriously when using the term for myself.

i have had several discussions with friends who identify as bisexual and do not find my lack of a specified label so exciting. i have been told that the label means well and aptly represents my sexuality when in actuality it does not. i am not the perfect shade of grey, lustfully looking at an equal number of persons of either gender, which to me is what the term has come to imply. "bisexual" isn't like the label "feminist". i'm not turning my back on the people who use the term by choosing to identify as something different.

i find it endearing to use the word queer to describe oneself because it can mean many things and allows for people to ask questions before making judgments instantaneously. it also creates a feeling of alliance with others of non-hetero preferences or strictly defined genders. what about a preference for intersexed/ genderqueer persons? what about an attraction to two members of the opposite sex having sex? i have also come in contact with those that are straight or gay and treat me like i am of the opposing sexuality instead of considering that we may have some similar ground between us. i'm the gay girl at the straight party and the straight girl at the gay party. but where are all the queer parties at? i really feel off the map. like the homo and hetero circles see me as a double agent that's going to have to make a decision one day and won't fit into either community until that point comes. it's very alienating to confront this sort of forced split-consciousness depending on the company one keeps.

after my first sexual experience with a woman, i had several questions running through my mind: did this count as sex? will we feel obligated to seek some kind of "new" friendship status? does this work similarly to the hook ups that i have had with men? i was immensely confused about everything because i had never been in the situation before and no one tells you how to deal with sexual encounters with persons of the same sex. not to mention all the fucked up information that is passed down like a torch to heteros: women aren't supposed to like sex, if a woman does like sex she's a slut, men's orgasms come no pun intended before women's, etc. with all of this sexist, rigid misinformation, it may be fair to say that non-heteros get even less of a thorough understanding of sexual relations in their formative years.

i have always wrestled with the popularized idea that sexuality is not "proven" until physically acted upon. in our culture, so much negative attention is pointed towards virgins over a certain age, yet how often are hetero virgins questioned about their sexuality? here is an example: when i came out to my mother years ago, her first reaction was to rationalize away my feelings and identification as somewhat of an expected inclination to curiosity naturally found in teenagers. i was just questioning another facet of my life, like pondering religions other than christianity or dying my hair different colors. her second reaction was to ask me how i even knew i wasn't straight. "well, if you've never been with a girl, then how can you be... bisexual, or whatever you want to call it?" never mind the fact that she had never questioned my feelings for boys. she then told me that all people were either gay or straight and there was no option in between. to drive this point home she said, "i have a friend, peggy, who is a lesbian and she told me a great way to tell if someone is straight or gay: ask them if they were on a deserted island and

could only bring one person to keep them company, who it would be, if it's someone of the same sex, they are gay, if it's someone of the opposite sex, they are straight." not only was this intended to push my sexual feelings into the realm of childhood curiosity but it also carried the weight of an absolute, unwavering opinion from a representative from a whole group. my mom wasn't just trying to tell me her and peggy's opinions; she was trying to tell me their views were in line with all straight and gay people respectively, like if they only agreed on one thing it would be that the world truly was that strictly defined. to counter this claim, i retorted, "well, mom, isn't it true that if you could pick one person to hang out with, it would be me?" without hesitating, she replied, "yes, of course" "well, then aren't you gay?" silence ensued for a moment as she pondered what to say next. she explained that the theoretical question was intended for sexual relationships, thus getting around the issue without having to directly analyze what she had just implied.

i do not intend for this example to come off as an illustration of me outsmarting my mom or portraying her as an ignorant individual. i tell this story because it had a lasting impact on how i saw my sexuality, since it was one of the first pieces of advice from an adult, i internalized it somewhat. what if i was straight and just being stupid about it? did i only see women attractive because i was unhappy in my relationships with men thus far? was i idealizing women as an alternative instead of a primary desire?

overall, i want to show how hard it has been for me to get to the point that i am at now and to stop echoing the disbelief that i have gotten from others. i have primarily been faced with questions prodding my intentions and validity: the odds have only ever been stacked up against me in terms of finding partners. i never got positive feedback on my identity from the media, from my family, from my friend circle, from my society (at least until recently). i always felt alone in my desires, according to all of those sources, people like me simply did not exist, and if they did, they were only in transit, forever wandering on the path in between two separate and very different lands, gay, or, straight.

i must acknowledge that have gotten much needed love and support from friends throughout the years and without it i don't know where i would be. like my best friends in tenth grade, cornering me at lunch, saying, "sari, we want to ask you something and we want you to be honest, we are your friends and we care about you, we want you to be happy and we want to support you in that, are you bisexual?" when i said yes, i expected shocks of awe, disgusted looks and changed feelings. instead, one of them blurted, "alright, cool, we just wanted to know, so who wants salad?" even though they acted as if my sexual identity was no more important than our food choices for the day, i was glad to get it out in the open. from there on out, i focused more about understanding myself than i did portraying myself the right way to others.

i have also realized that i don't need to be in a relationship in order for my sexual feelings to have validity. i, along with just about every other young female in america, have dealt with the internalized belief that sex belongs only between persons in committed relationships. attraction is not solely physical and queers know this: it's about quality, not quantity. i refuse to feel ashamed or doubt myself for not being in a relationship with a woman and simultaneously calling myself queer. i don't need to be actively involved with anyone to be queer and i especially do not want threesomes all the time! shut

non-queers: stop boxing us in. stop thinking in terms of gay or straight. stop glossing us over. be supportive of your friends or family members that are queer or who might be. start believing in more than two options. start believing what we tell you. start believing that our sexuality, like yours, is only one facet of our being. realize that we don't exist in opposition to one another!

queers: stop second-guessing. stop being ashamed. stop essentializing all non-hetero experiences. stop trying to change yourself. stop tearing down what you should be building up. realize that you have the right to live your life as you see fit. know that you are not alone. know that loving and caring for people regardless of and despite their physical attributes is possible and real and ideal!

theory vs. praxis: menstruation

the following section includes excerpts from a paper i wrote entitled "the calm before the storm: pms and menstruation" for a philosophy course last spring as well as my personal reflections on the same subject. it is my intent to bridge the gap between communal and individual, textbook and lived experience.

theory.

Monthly menstrual occurrences are relegated to the private sphere along with women's accounts of their experiences. Females are expected to simultaneously ensure their periods are regular (for our own reproductive health) while keeping the bloody details under wraps (or in rags). Placing a barrier between our onlookers and vocalization of them creates a gap for scientists, doctors and other influential actors to fill with so-called truths and knowledge about what occurs in bodies that they do not occupy.

Menstruation is easily relegated to the scientific and academic communities by naturalized desires to separate ourselves from our "dirty" bodily functions. The closest women come to talking about menstruation as a function that belongs in the private realm is when they describe it as "a hassle". Martin writes at length on the status of menstruation in relation to our capitalist system, which views it as a "failed production" and forces it into the only spot in the workplace that is seen as acceptable: the bathroom. Restrooms are used to "keep their menstrual blood from showing" as well as utilize the space for physical freedom in an environment where "their physical movements are often rigidly controlled". By forcing women into a private sphere, they are able to act "in subversive ways" out of the gaze of a watchful eye. This situation simultaneously oppresses women by confining them to continued cultural assumptions of how they should be treated and liberates them from strenuous work.

Several historical and cultural beliefs about menstruation are explored in Paula Weideger's chapter "Taboo" of her book "Menstruation and Menopause: The Physiology and Psychology, The Myth and Reality". She discusses different group theories on how menstruation is impure as well as how menstruating women should be dealt with. She notes that menstruating women are seen as threats to men and their health but not to themselves or other women. This is still evident today in the stipulations that women cannot practice or attend certain religious ceremonies or customs such as synagogues, taking communion or praying in certain areas. Daily activities such as food preparation are forbidden when a woman is menstruating "for fear that the food will be spoilt". Menstrual huts are common in innumerable societies, past and present, to isolate women in their threatening state. In general, our culture as well as all cultures around the globe "don't consider [ourselves] to be "practicing" the menstrual taboo".

Weideger explores the origin of menstrual taboos by discussing common beliefs of North American Natives, Jews, Romans, Arabs, Chinese and New Guineaans: blood itself contains a living thing: spirit and should not be ingested, touched or tampered with. Yet this does not explain why menstrual taboos have consistently been held by men of various cultures. While they fear and stigmatize monthly periods, women have learned to cope with and even embrace menstruation, whether they see it as "unclean" or not. Weideger states that "the menstrual taboo is the result of the fears of one sex about the other" that serves as a "consistent confirmation of a negative self-image" for women.

Cultural myths about women's origins also serve to harm and negate their sense of equality with men. "When women is mythically described as a castrated male, menstrual blood may be seen as the symbol of castration". Underlying this fear of castration are ideologies that all women have penis envy and men are perpetually in a state of anxiety and fear about the prospect of being castrated. This also enforces popular psychological conditions such as the Oedipus complex, incest taboo and Freudian theories on adolescent development. This could also be included to serve as proof that women are inferior to men since they lack the definitive male feature of a penis. Looking at these by-products of menstrual taboos, it is easy to see why they are still in place today all over the world - vested interest by men.

Sexual relations during menstruation have also been portrayed as a taboo in several cultures. Orthodox Judaism forbids intercourse during menses and 7 consequent days following as well as requires that women "go to the mikvah (ritual bath) and be cleansed". The Bamana, a peoples of Mali, believe that "sexual intercourse during menses cause the man to fall sick", make a link between it and children born with leprosy and theorize that "a child conceived during a woman's menses will be sexually deformed". These beliefs passed down informally throughout generations have an effect on the mindsets of both genders towards menstruation. In the article "Women Learn to Sing the Menstrual Blues", Karen Page reported her findings on the link between sexual activity during menstruation, birth control and menstrual flow. She found that her target group of married women on the birth control pill in 1973 was more likely to have sex if they had a lighter period, which is an effect of taking the pill. Weidger challenges the face value of Page's results by questioning the role of their husbands' beliefs about having intercourse during menstruation. This is a great example of the lack of social or situational backgrounds integrated into research questions and even entire studies.

The ancient Greeks serve as a wonderful case study in popular opinions held hundreds of years ago on the differences between the sexes. Aristotle believed that the sexes were generally very similar until coming to puberty. The Hippocratic Corpus believed that differentiation of the sexes was not formalized until adulthood; children had passages in their bodies that were too small to allow for "agitation of the fluids" that would separate men from women later on in life. Puberty symbolized "the beginning of an extended period of adolescence for boys prior to their assuming all the duties of citizens [;] girls were thought capable of fulfilling the roles of adult women in marriage and motherhood" when they were expected to menstruate, age 14. Greeks believed that menarche meant "the end, not the beginning, of puberty" for girls. This portrayal of puberty was intended to correlate "both the production of menses in a girl and semen in a boy", thereby justifying the view of menstruation as a solely reproductive function. One must wonder how this correlates to the belief that girls are naturally more mature than boys (could this have been a justification for marrying them off earlier in life and giving males more "fun" time before settling down, thus continuing the cycle of young girl-older man pairing that seems to continue today?)

The Hippocratic Corpus hypothesized that a girl who did not menstruate by a certain age was believed to have produced blood already but that it was contained and trapped within their body by a stigma that needed to be de-activated by the deflowering process. Blood restrained from flowing freely could move to the area surrounding the heart, cause "a dullening sensation leading to symptoms similar to those of epilepsy and often [end] in attempted suicide". If it migrated to the brain, the excess would "cause melancholy and trouble her spirits" or drive her to commit suicide. This seemed to hold the idea that girls' bodies were acting as expected yet needed a heterosexual mate (or husband) in order to relieve them of their condition and numerous possible negative side effects.

The Hippocratic Corpus tried to rationalize the eventual appearance of menstruation by stating that "menstrual difficulties begin...around the age of marriage" (not coincidentally, the same age of expected puberty, 14) and girls "do not work hard enough to use up all the nourishment in their bodies" due to large amounts of "food and growth". Adequate nutrition was seen as a keystone factor in the onset of menstruation; Greeks believed it was achieved once "amount of body fat to total body weight reaches a certain ratio". This is still believed to be true to a certain degree. Weidger states that the "critical ratio of fat to lean tissue, triggers the onset of menstruation". After the onset of menses, it was theorized that women still continued to produce blood throughout and beyond pregnancy. Aristotle hypothesized that pregnant women used this lifeblood to nurture the fetus and lactating women's milk was actually the same blood reformed to nurture her newborn.

Even though this blood was stigmatized, women were seen as improper without it. Amenorrhea, prolonged absence of menstruation, was seen as a major scare for 19th century women. They were inundated with advertisements that urged them to pay special attention to their cycles, lest they need to calm down and take the "female corrective pills" that were featured. This lack of menstruation and product advertisement gives an interesting mirror to "sanitary" products promising to "make menstruation invisible" while touting comfort, freedom and, ultimately, cleanliness. Either way, there have always been scientifically designed remedies eager to jump in and (theoretically) cure whatever ails women.

praxis.

i got my first period at the ripe age of 12. all i remember was coming in from recess, checking my panties and noticing a small brown spot. i didn't know how to deal with it. i wasn't sure if it was blood because i thought it would be bright red like i had heard about from my teachers, female family members and friends. i eventually started wearing pads once a month all the way until the age of 17 because i didn't know anything about my body. since i had a thick hymen, i couldn't even really tell exactly where my vagina was - i know that sounds ridiculous, but how was i supposed to? it wasn't until i lost my virginity to a stupid guy who didn't deserve it (typical story, i know) that i picked up this vital piece of information. from then on, i was determined to never learn something about myself from someone else - it was at this time that i also made the jump to tampons.

also around this period (no pun intended), i read "cunt" by inga muscio and was touched by it. she mentions that she ceased using advil or ibuprofen for menstrual cramps because it would make them worse the following month. i decided to try this experiment and to my delight it absolutely worked. in the short span of 4 or 5 months i had virtually no cramping after the first day of menstruation; over the past 5 years i have only felt like i needed drugs once. this really pushed me to listen to my body and look into more natural, less invasive or consumerist ways to deal with cramps. i started drinking teas (chamomile or spearmint), masturbating, exercising, limiting salt intake and increasing fruits and veggies during the few days leading up to and after the start of my period.

i used tampons with applicators until the age of 19, when i finally made the mental connection between convenience and wastefulness. i then used only ob brand which was somewhat of a second stage in learning my way around my vulva; i had to touch myself much more intently and accurately. i still saw my period as somewhat of a nuisance but it was much more bearable. yes, i disliked the dried flicks of blood under my fingernails and having cold hands in the winter (brrrr!) but overall it was worth it to make the switch to save plastic.

i went to toronto earlier this summer to visit a friend and while at the toronto women's bookstore (womensbookstore.com) i picked up a copy of "yearning: race, gender and cultural politics" by bell hooks (i'm an absolute fanatic) as well as a diva cup! for those that are unfamiliar with a diva cup (or keeper, moon cup, instead, etc.), it is a cup that is inserted in the vagina much like a tampon that catches menstrual flow and is emptied when full. it cost me \$40 and should last a year or more. i thought it was a pretty big investment until i thought about how many tampons i would purchase in the same time period and how wasteful they are - 5 years of use adds up, especially in terms of waste (flip the next page for more info).

my immediate issue with the diva cup was the physical act of inserting it. yet using tampons without applicators really prepared me for using a menstrual cup. using menstrual pads or tampons with applicators acted as barriers to fully touching my own body and therefore getting to know it better. had i not progressed in this way, i think i would have a much different relationship with my vagina. using a diva cup has given me the joy back in getting my period. to me, it is proof that my body is functioning properly (and that i'm not pregnant - score). as explained in the previous section, it is a popularly held belief that menstruation ravages the female body and ruins its "natural" rhythm. i have even heard that female animals such as rats and primates are not tested on as frequently or at all for fear that their cycles will fuck up statistical testing. i don't want these females to be tested on, but i do want to point out the underlying idea that male bodies are "normal" and a regular monthly occurrence is seen as disruptive.

*i would also like to add that i think birth control is disruptive, our hormones are manipulated and our bodies are tricked into thinking we are pregnant. the pill was originally tested on black women in the us and latina women in puerto rico, causing hundreds of thousands of sterilizations among women of color in order to create a product intended for western middle class white women. think about it. oh and that 4-period-a-year-pill bullshit? i don't think so. pick up "our bodies, ourselves" by the boston women's health collective, read up on it, talk to your friends, your female family members, your teachers, your co-workers and anyone else who knows what it's like to have a period. take back the knowledge of your body from the companies designed to profit off of our blood!

jeremy and the juggalos

i don't think i told you the story of when i came out here and delivered a juggalo necklace...i don't think i told you that story. do you want to hear that one? its pretty good.

i was with my program director's son who is named LT and he's a pretty cool guy; although, he liked insane clown posse and he liked tech n9ne. he only had two cd's in his car and one was an insane clown posse cd and... i'm sorry, he had three. one was insane clown posse, one was rob zombie and the third one was a mix of mostly tech n9ne and that was all we listened to for 10 ½ hours. only those three cd's, so i went a little insane. he had this juggalo necklace and he talked to me about the tenants of juggaloism, or whatever, i don't know what the exact wording would be. but he told me what it means to be a juggalo, what it represents, for a very long time. so he has this juggalo necklace and he's like, "yo, i need to drop this off to my friend" who just got out of prison for stabbing his ex-girlfriend's black boyfriend or something, and i was like, "what? i thought you told me that [juggalos] aren't racist?" and he was like, "yeah, but a lot of juggalos are really dumb so they're racist anyway just because of the proclivity to their environment." and he was, you know, a pretty well-learned person; he was by no means dumb.

and so we pull up to this trailer park in a town called minnesota, north dakota. clearly a very intelligent place: naming a town after a state that neighbors their state. so we pull up to this trailer park and he's telling me about his friend and so his friend comes out... i was like, "well, how far away is this from where we're supposed to be?" and he's like, "oh, i only had to drive two hours out of the way to get here." and i was like, "what are we doing here?" and he's like "oh we're dropping off this juggalo necklace" and he's like, "a juggalo can't be without his necklace if he has one, you know, he has to rep his sign." and i was like, "what?" and this guy comes out of this trailer park and he's this really skinny, like, hillbilly redneck and he's covered in juggalo tattoos. then they just start going "JUG-a-LOW", like, yelling at each other and talking really fast and every other word is a swear or is the word juggalo and are saying things that are incomprehensible to me. i look out on the porch and there's a kid in a wheelchair drinking a 40 of cobra with a crazy straw, listening to insane clown posse on their trailer park porch. then they start talking more about juggalos and i'm hiding in the backseat. then he gives him the necklace and they, i don't know, do this juggalo hand sign and we drive away. then he's like, "you know, you gotta look out for your juggalo brothers." i was like, oh my god, thank you for that experience. that was on the way to where i am now.

this account comes from a taped phone conversation with my friend jeremy, who is fulfilling his study abroad requirement on a lakota native american reservation in south dakota. in including this story, i would like to highlight the fact that we don't come to be who we are without the calculated experience and wisdom of others. we all have said "i have a friend who..." or "i know a girl that..." before; other people's stories become our own.

do cool shit with dis!

make laundry detergent!

- 1 cup washing soda (Arm & Hammer)
- ½ cup borax (can be found in laundry aisle)
- 1 bar soap (Fels Naptha or other laundry soap)
- 3+ gallons warm water
- 5 gallon bucket/container with lid (for storage & mixing)
- large stirring utensil
- large pot
- cheese grater (or something to cut up the soap)

- Put about 4 cups of water into the pan and bring to a boil
- While waiting for the water to boil, begin grating bar of laundry soap
- Add small amounts of soap at a time while stirring gradually; continue until all laundry soap is dissolved
- Put 3 gallons of warm water into bucket, followed by washing soda, borax and dissolved laundry soap liquid; stir
- Let mixture stand for roughly 24 hours, preferably with lid on
- If consistency is varied, stir before using

make tampons!

- large natural sponge (found at hardware stores)
- string (optional)
- pot
- water

- Boil sponge for a few minutes to clean it of any impurities
- Cut it onto separate shapes: one for heavy flow and one for lighter flow
- If using string, cut to desired length and tie securely around the pieces of sponge
- Wet sponge and squeeze out excess moisture before using
- When sponge becomes full, rinse under faucet or into a basin of water (the bloody water can be given to plants, which pull nutrients from the mixture)
- Make sure to boil the sponges after each period to ensure sterility

TIP: Every day 2.5 million tampons are flushed down the toilet, along with 1.4 million sanitary towels and 700,000 panty liners. Almost 70% of all blockages in the sewerage system are attributed to "disposable" sanitary items. They contain dioxins from the pesticides used to grow the cotton itself as well as bleach from dying them and are not biodegradable; they will end up in a landfill or as pollution in the ocean! Dioxins have been linked to endometriosis, which makes the lining of the uterus grow elsewhere in the body.

ALTERNATIVE: Jade and Pearl Sea Sponge Tampons are another great alternative that can be purchased on gladrags.com and also includes helpful information and tips on how to keep your sea sponges clean.



DIS THE RAT

*thanks to
hasan for
the logo! :)

zines

licking stars off ceilings
mistaken for straight
culture slut
retell your rumors
forget shorter showers

swarm of the lotus
gorgoroth
bomb the music industry!
defiance, oh
ghostlimb
cruel unit
p.s. eliot
title fight
littlefoot
wingnut dishwashers union
quinn s. & the blackbirds

books

the alchemy of race and rights - patricia williams

talking back: thinking feminist, thinking black - bell hooks

nervous conditions - tsitsi dangarembga

the harry potter series - j. k. rowling

tank girl: armadillo! - alan c. martin

a girl's guide to taking over the world - karen green and tristan taormino

suggested things

this is not a love story
learning good consent
fundamentally ill
chainbreaker
take back your life

röyksopp
birdflesh
ekkaia
mind of asian
bolesno grinje
nux vomica
antsy pants
krs-one
ballast
cryptic slaughter
thulsa doom

feels like friday
fight boredom!
said the pot to the kettle
against prisons
barefoot and in the kitchen

music

kakistocracy
matt & kim
team dresch
muga
oroku
patareni
viu drakh
anti-product
destroy
the b-52s
dr. dog

soldier: a poet's childhood - june jordan

making stuff and doing things - kyle brano

dreams of trespass - fatima mernissi

the wondrous life of oscar wao - junot diaz

Inspirations & enjoyable things

bell hooks, tube socks, humans vs. zombies, transnational feminist theory, cuddling, the adventures of pete & pete, vegan smoothies, natty boh, plaid shirts, beardtober, hair dye, blast beats, kickball, super mario kart, bonfires, random acts of kindness, late night phone calls, avocado sushi, puppies, d.i.y. remedies, sorry trees!, netflix, new orleans, wemakezines.ning.com, death cab for cutie, vibrators, chocolate soymilk, snail mail, earth first!, jane addams, sand castles, medusa, outer space noises, eating and not moving, rote zora, punk rock flea markets, bandanas, circle pits, bikini kill, cold pizza, sarah haskins' target women, jeremy, barbara kruger

stuff that reminds me of PA

green grass, horse & buggies, sheetz, long drives, vfw shows, softball, ghost hunting, bright stars and black skies, pretzels, lionshead, blizzards, abandoned industrial parks, chapped lips, smoky diners, straightedge tattoos, dusty roads, padiddles, rooftops, torn shoes, all variations of corn, extreme christianity, hiking, firehalls, shoofly pie, fastnacht day, groundhogs, black and white tvs, snow days, covered bridges, hershey's chocolate, the lottery, potholes, popped collars, hay bales

about the author

sari, also known as crg, is currently working on two other zines: *hoax*. and *ten songs*, both collaborative efforts with friends. her weaknesses include vegan brownies, cute animals and gingers; her strengths include assertiveness, edward 40 hands and hulk smash.

